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Washington, DC – Wednesday, Reps. Steve Israel (D-NY), José E. Serrano (D-NY) and Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) announced a proposal for a National Hate Crimes Hotline.

"Recently, New York has suffered with the news of two deadly hate crimes. These violent acts remind us that the fight against hate and discrimination continues in our communities," said Rep. Steve Israel. "All too often, victims of hate crimes don't report the acts perpetrated against them. Without accurate reporting, law enforcement is limited in its response. A National Hate Crimes Hotline will give these victims a way to privately and promptly report bias-motivated crimes, just as the National Domestic Violence Hotline has assisted millions of callers trapped in difficult situations."

"We must do everything possible to combat the cruel power of hate crimes," Rep. Serrano said. "A national hotline will be another option for those living in fear to report these terrible acts. With the recent spate of hate crimes in our community, the time is now for increased action at all levels of government. At the very least, we must have the best possible information about the prevalence of these hurtful acts. The bottom line is that this hotline will help our communities to be safer places."

"In recent months, we have seen appalling and horrendous acts of hate in New York. A National Hate Crimes Hotline will help to prevent future crimes by ensuring more accurate reporting of these terrible incidents and improving local responsiveness. We must not tolerate these crimes and a national hotline would be an important step toward cracking down on these terrible acts," said Rep. Velázquez, the Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

The hotline will be modeled after the National Domestic Violence Hotline, with a goal of increasing both the reporting of and local responsiveness to hate crimes. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has fielded more than 2 million calls since its launch in 1996.

New York recently endured two high-profile hate crimes in Patchogue and Brooklyn. In both cases, someone lost their life in a bias-motivated crime. In New York State, 273 agencies work on behalf of the over 15 million New Yorkers to report hate crime statistics. However, only 29 of the 273 New York agencies reported a total 493 hate crimes statewide in 2007. Based on recent reports, many victims are simply not reporting these crimes out of fear of what will happen to them.

The FBI is required to track hate crime statistics, but does not require state agencies to report them, causing for major discrepancies in the number of crimes reported per state.

In "Hate Crimes Reported by Victims and Police," an article based on the National Criminal

Victimization Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting, the nation had an annual average of 210,000 hate crimes between July 2000 and December 2003. Only 92,000 of these crimes were reported to police.

According to an FBI report from October 2008, there were 595 incidents of anti-Hispanic hate crimes in 2007, an increase of 3.3% from the 576 incidents reported in 2006.

According to an annual Hate Crime Statistics Report released jointly by the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2,025 law enforcement agencies reported 7,624 hate crime incidents involving 9,006 offenses in 2007 (the most recent year for which reporting is available). Additionally, an analysis of the 7,621 single-bias incidents reported in 2007 revealed the following:

- 50.8 percent were racially motivated
- 18.4 percent were motivated by religious bias
- 16.6 percent resulted from sexual-orientation bias
- 13.2 percent stemmed from ethnicity/national origin bias